

Chargé Margaret Diop Remarks: TIP Subject Matter Expert
Exchange at Police Training Academy, Port of Spain
August 13, 2013

Good morning. I am honored to be with you today to mark the beginning of two days of knowledge and information sharing.

The work we do today is part of a global movement to end one of the gravest human rights violations: human trafficking.

It is an issue that demands attention, commitment and passion from all of us. But it is an issue that is too often misunderstood.

Trafficking in Persons, or Human Trafficking, is **defined** as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purposes of exploitation.

That's a long definition! I prefer a simpler one: modern slavery.

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When we talk about human trafficking, we are talking about slavery. When a man or woman is locked in a home and forced to work as a domestic servant -- alone, abused, and incapable of leaving -- that's slavery.

When a man or woman is lured by false promises of a better life, and then imprisoned in a brothel -- that's slavery.

In the United States, the word, **slavery**, evokes a painful reminder of our nation's history. It is a history that we cannot and must not forget, and we are committed to being a leader in the ongoing fight to end this unconscionable degradation of human dignity.

This year marks 150 years since Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that "all persons held as slaves" would thenceforth forever be free. We have struggled, fought, and lost lives to deliver on this promise of freedom.

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Our commitment to freedom is a value that defines the United States as a nation. And I know that Trinidad and Tobago shares this commitment.

In fact, I just experienced my first Emancipation Day in Trinidad, a celebration of the abolition of slavery here 179 years ago, almost thirty years before the United States.

By working together, with events like this, we are fulfilling that promise of freedom.

Living up to this commitment is not always easy. Especially when we are talking about human trafficking, an issue that is so often misunderstood. In 2013, I imagine you would have a hard time finding someone who supports the idea of slavery.

Yet, according to the International Labor Organization, an estimated 2.5 million people around the world are victims of human

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trafficking every year. Profits for human traffickers are estimated at 31.6 billion U.S. Dollars annually.

The truth is, human trafficking is happening in almost every country around the world. And we know that human trafficking is connected to organized crime. Criminal trafficking networks cross borders and span continents.

That is why, if we want to make progress, country partnerships are so important. We must form our own networks to share information and strategies, so that we may disrupt the traffickers.

Our first challenge, though, is to recognize trafficking when we see it.

I know that through the presentations and discussions planned over the next two days, you will all be better equipped to recognize slavery, regardless of the form or disguise it takes.

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Human traffickers are skilled at ensuring that their victims do not obviously appear to be slaves. In fact, in many cases the victims are presented as the perpetrators of crimes – often as prostitutes or illegal immigrants. I know that for those of you on the front lines of this battle, this makes your job even harder.

This is a scourge that tears at our social fabric, that unravels human dignity, and that continues to undermine our dedication to freedom.

I commend all of you for doing the hard work and for standing up against slavery. As Nelson Mandela said, “to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

I want to thank the Ministry of National Security for partnering with us on this Subject Matter Expert and Exchange.

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I know that it took a lot of work and cooperation to put this together. Your efforts, I'm sure, will go a long way toward delivering on our shared commitment to freedom. **THANK YOU.**

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